

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

July 21, 2006

Mr. Mike Johanns, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

On July 21, 2006, I received a request for a Natural Disaster Determination (NDD) by the US Secretary of Agriculture from the Garfield County Board of Commissions.

Although the past several months have brought substantial drought relief for the majority of Montana counties, not all portions of Montana have enjoyed in this relief. Garfield County has not received substantial rain since May of this year.

In the past three weeks, Garfield County has experienced 95 degree plus temperatures causing damage to both hay crops and spring crops. Hay production is minimal. Spring crops may be utilized for grazing but will not be worth harvesting or haying.

Due to the dryness of the county, several lightening caused fires are burning at this time. Ranchers will be obliged to find pasture elsewhere at additional cost or sell their livestock. Ranchers will have to purchase hay to get through the winter.

Garfield County has received substantially below normal precipitation during the winter and spring months of 2006. No spring runoff means a lack of water in reservoirs for livestock through the spring, summer and fall months. The local agricultural economy has suffered. Some of the smaller producers may be looking at liquidation due to high temperatures, lack of rain and fire conditions.

I am recommending Garfield County for National Drought Declaration. A copy of this letter will be sent to the State Farm Service Agency office so they may begin to compile the necessary damage assessment information. Your prompt review and approval of this request will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger
Nancy Peterson, Department of Agriculture
General Randall Mosley, Department of Military Affairs
Dave Maser, Disaster & Emergency Services
Randy Johnson, Farm Services Agency
Jesse Aber, Department of Natural Resource & Conservation